

New Jersey Family Assistance Center



Update

January 25, 2002

Newsletter Mailing List

This is the fourth edition of the *Family Assistance Center Update*, a newsletter devoted to keeping you informed of the issues arising out of the Sept. 11 tragedy. If you know of a New Jersey resident who lost a loved one or who was injured in the Sept. 11 attacks and who is not receiving the newsletters, please ask that person to contact the New Jersey Office of Recovery and Victim Assistance at 609-777-1248 to be added to the newsletter mailing list.

In addition, back issues of the *Family Assistance Center Update* may be obtained by logging onto the State's Web site at www.nj.gov (click on "Family Assistance Center" under the "Security" heading) or by calling the Department of Law and Public Safety's Office of Public Affairs at 609-292-4791.

New Coordinator for Office of Recovery and Victim Assistance Named

Governor James E. McGreevey has appointed Eric Shuffler as Coordinator of the Office of Recovery and Victim Assistance. Shuffler replaces Karen Fiorelli, who temporarily filled the position after Lillian Borrone resigned from her post as coordinator in late December.

The Office of Recovery and Victim Assistance, established in response to the Sept. 11 attacks, is responsible for leading the State's recovery efforts as well as assisting victims of the tragedy.

Prior to becoming coordinator, Shuffler was chief of staff for U.S. Sen. Robert Torricelli.

Family Meeting Set for February 9

The meeting with Governor James E. McGreevey for families who lost loved ones in the Sept. 11 attacks has been set for Feb. 9. The meeting is slated to take place at Rutgers University Student Center, 126 College Ave., New Brunswick. You will receive a letter providing details about the meeting and directions to the University.

State of New Jersey

Governor James E. McGreevey
Eric Shuffler, Coordinator
Office of Recovery and Victim Assistance

Family Assistance Center Update

Published by NJ Department of Law & Public Safety. For copies, call 609-292-4791.

New York Family Assistance Center Relocated

As of Jan. 7, 2002, the New York Family Assistance Center has relocated from Pier 94 in Manhattan to 51 Chambers Street, in Lower Manhattan. The center will continue to operate during normal business hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. For information call, 212-560-2730.

World Trade Center Scholarship Program

New Jersey recently enacted the New Jersey World Trade Center Scholarship Fund for children and spouses of New Jersey residents killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C.

The law requires the appointment of a Board of Trustees within the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority. The Board will be responsible for developing policies and procedures for implementing the scholarship, such as defining how families will be required to demonstrate need for the funds and establishing a formal application process.

HESAA has posted on its Web site a list of frequently asked questions about the World Trade Center Scholarship Fund and the answers to those questions. Log onto www.hesaa.org for this information. You may also contact HESAA at 800-792-8670 to be put on a mailing list to receive more information on this program as it becomes available.

Post Secondary Student Assistance Fund

The Hoffman-La Roche Foundation has donated \$500,000 to the Independent College Fund of New Jersey to establish the Post Secondary Student Assistance Fund for family members of victims of the Sept. 11 attacks. Each of the 14 member colleges of the Independent College Fund of New Jersey is aware of this program and can assist any eligible student in applying for the grant. If you would like to get a list of the member schools or would like more information, contact the Independent College Fund of New Jersey at 908-277-3424.

Death Certificates

Since September, volunteer attorneys from the New Jersey Division of Law have been assisting families of loved ones who died in the Sept. 11 attacks with filing for New York death certificates.

To make a claim for payments under an insurance policy, transfer property held in the decedent's name, probate a will or apply for Social Security or pension benefits, filers must first obtain a death certificate from the State of New York or a judicial declaration of death from New Jersey. Death certificates are not automatically issued in cases where a loved one has not been located and, instead, must be applied for through the New York City courts.

Deputy attorneys general are on-call from the Division of Law's Newark offices from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday to meet with family members as needed at the New Jersey Family Assistance Center. When you arrive at the center, staff and trained volunteers (known as "companions") from state and county Offices of Victim-Witness Advocacy will ask if you plan on applying for a death certificate. If so, a companion will immediately reach out for a deputy to meet with you at the center that day.

On Saturdays, a companion will contact the Division of Law on your behalf. A deputy attorney general will contact you the following Monday to arrange a convenient time to meet to complete the death certificate application at your home or another place of your choice.

In addition to seeking the assistance of a deputy attorney general in securing a

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death certificate from New York, filers may also seek assistance by visiting New York's Family Assistance Center in Manhattan, contacting the New Jersey State Bar Association at 888-541-1900 or contacting a private attorney.

As an alternative to seeking a death certificate from New Jersey, family members may also seek a judicial declaration of death from the superior courts in any of New Jersey's 21 counties. Under existing rules, New Jersey authorities may only issue death certificates for people who have died within the State of New Jersey. New Jersey issues judicial declarations of death — not death certificates — in cases where families of missing persons seek to have the missing person declared dead.

Filers may obtain judicial declaration of death forms from their county surrogate's office or the State Judiciary Web site, www.judiciary.state.nj.us/forms.htm. For a list of county surrogates log onto www.coanjer.org/surrogat.htm. Volunteer lawyers from the Division of Law are also available to help filers through this process, should they wish to pursue it in lieu of filing for a death certificate.

NJ Immigration Policy Network at Family Assistance Center

The New Jersey Immigration Policy Network has established the Immigrant Information Desk at the New Jersey Family Assistance Center. The Immigrant Information Desk is staffed by immigration attorneys, social workers, counselors and others devoted to helping the immigrant community.

The Immigrant Information Desk is prepared to offer assistance to immigrants who have questions concerning, among other things:

- ❖ legal assistance,
- ❖ employment issues, such as lost wages, unemployment insurance benefits, workers compensation and employment discrimination,
- ❖ mental health, grief and vocational counseling.

For information, call the New Jersey Immigration Policy Network at 973-622-6448 or visit the information desk at the New Jersey Family Assistance Center, Liberty State Park, Jersey City. The center is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

Additionally, the New Jersey State Bar Association is offering free legal help to the immigrant community as part of its commitment to helping those affected by the September 11 tragedy. The Association can be reached toll-free at 888-541-1900.

Disaster Fund for the Children of New Jersey Ends March 31

The Disaster Fund for the Children of New Jersey, launched by the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, is expected to stop accepting applications for donations March 31, 2002. The program, made possible through generous donations by private citizens, corporations, schools and organizations, was established to provide immediate resources to children and their families affected by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The program is designed to provide six weeks worth of emergency funds for families or households that lost loved ones in the attacks. You may be eligible if you are a parent or guardian of a child who was supported by someone who died in the attacks. If you have not applied for assistance through this fund, please do so as soon as possible. For more information, call New Jersey's toll-free crisis hotline at 866-NJ-CRISIS or contact the New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce Foundation at 609-989-7888.

Legal Resource Handbook Available

The New Jersey law firm Riker, Danzig, Scherer, Hyland & Perretti, has published "Helping Handbook," a legal resource for families of September 11 victims. The 49-page booklet focuses on legal issues that surviving families may face and covers several topics, including death certificates, Social Security benefits and unemployment assistance. For a copy, log onto www.riker.com.

Temporary Assistance and Intake Centers Established in New Jersey

Kenneth R. Feinberg, Special Master for the federal September 11 Victim's Compensation Fund, has established two Temporary Assistance and Intake Centers in New Jersey where eligible victims of the Sept. 11 attacks can submit advance benefit claims.

The new centers are located at 101 Hudson St., Jersey City and at 399 Thornall St., Edison. They will operate from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. Advance benefit claims are also being processed at 780 3rd Ave. (at 49th St), Lower Level Conference Center, New York, N.Y., and at Sheraton Crystal City, 1800 Jefferson David Highway, Arlington, Va. Claimants may also call 888-714-3385 or 202-305-1352 and TDD: 888-560-0844.

The creation of the centers follows Feinberg's announcement of a set of in-

terim final regulations that establishes procedures for processing claims under the September 11 Victim's Compensation Fund and provides advance benefits — \$50,000 for families who lost loved ones or \$25,000 for seriously injured victims — to those who need financial assistance while their claims are being processed.

Claimants are encouraged to seek the assistance of their attorneys prior to making a decision about whether to file a claim under the program. Those who do not already have legal representation may contact the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, New Jersey. The organization, through its Trial Lawyers Care Program, is providing free legal services to individuals seeking compensation from the fund. For information, call its toll-free line at 888-780-8637 or log onto its Web site at www.911LawHelp.org. The New Jersey State Bar Association is also assisting families who need legal advice about the new federal rules. The organization can be reached at 888-541-1900.

Chamber of Commerce Financial Seminars

The New Jersey Chamber of Commerce has announced it will host a series of financial planning seminars or workshops. More information on these will be available in future newsletters.

Conferences Planned

The New Jersey Self-Help Group Clearinghouse, a non-profit agency that provides information on more than 4,500 self-help groups in New Jersey, has planned a series of conferences relating to the Sept. 11 attacks. The conferences will feature speakers whose loved ones have died in catastrophic events, such as the bombing of Pan Am flight 103. To pre-register or to get the dates, times and locations for the conferences, please call 800-367-6274.

September 11 Family Member Questionnaire

In December, New Jersey sent out September 11 Family Member Questionnaires seeking information on the types of services and charitable assistance you have sought. While many of you have responded, others have not.

We are seeking this information to identify your needs and serve you better. If you have received a questionnaire, but have not filled it out, please take a moment to do so. If you have not received a questionnaire, please call the Office of the Attorney General at 609-292-9064 to request one.

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